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Round Robin

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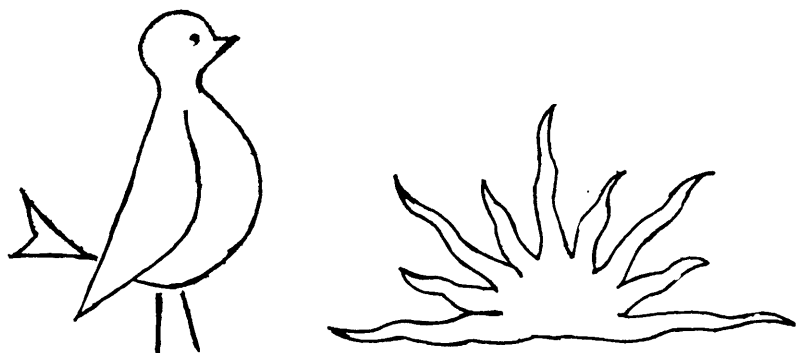
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ROUND ROBIN

Dorothy E. Smith, Editor

Dear Editor,

It is my hypothesis that children who are grouped according to their frustration level in reading have a less adequate self concept than those grouped according to their instructional reading level.

Classroom teachers, in my opinion, tend to group children according to their frustrational level. This seems to cause more frustration for the child and less for the teacher. Of course, it seems easier to have three reading groups instead of four. Why not push those four or five slow readers into a group with children who are a little better readers. It saves time and a lot of effort. But wait, if each child reads at his instructional level he will experience success instead of failure. He will also progress much faster than if he were in a constant state of frustration. The classroom teacher would feel much more accomplishment also because she would recognize the new reading enthusiasm of the children.

Of course, practical considerations must enter into our method of teaching reading. Our time is limited and there are many other activities demanding our attention. My own personal experience has proven this to me. At the present I am teaching only half days because we are patiently awaiting the completion of our new school. It is necessary for us to share a school temporarily. Our class consists of 26 second graders. Out of these 26 children, five are reading in a second grade reader. Five read in book one, nine read in the primer and five read in a pre-primer. There are also two non-readers in the class. At the beginning of the year I gave an informal reading in-

ventory to each child. Vocabulary as well as comprehension were considered in grouping. Each child showed a very definite instructional level. I have been teaching four groups and, when spare time arises, help is given to the non-readers. My reading program is very time consuming, but with the help of a reading consultant the program is moving along smoothly.

At one point in the program I tried to join my two low groups. The "pre-primer" children were asked to read a few stories in the primer. They were asked first to read silently and then aloud. Their vocabulary as well as their comprehension skills were noticeably lacking at this level. I also noticed a lull in their ordinary enthusiasm. I felt an urge to remove the source of their frustration immediately and to apologize for the injustice. Instead I told them how well they did and that soon they would have a new book. They are now progressing with ease at their level.

It seems to me that reading at one's frustration level is harmful to a child's self concept as well as being harmful educationally. I feel it is time for the classroom teacher to re-evaluate her reading program. She should not group according to standardized tests since these merely show the child's frustration level. A child who misses five or more words out of 100 words is reading at his frustration level. Are you guilty?

Rosemary Leahy
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Editor's Note:

The foregoing brings to mind the lesson we are being taught by the behavioral psychologists; that "positive reinforcement enhances learning." This is the jargonistic way of saying that success breeds success. If a child can see that he is really reading, it will make him that much more capable of reaching up to the next step.